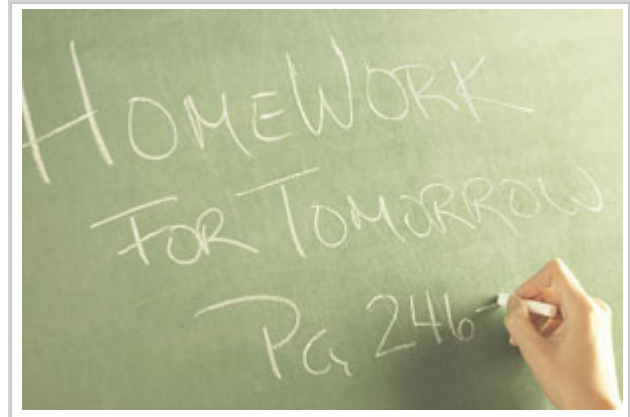


Adult ed slashed, class sizes increase at MHUSD

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By [Lindsay Weaver](#)

As budget season board meetings go, no one was smiling when \$1.26 million was eliminated at Tuesday's session at the Morgan Hill Unified School District office. Teachers in the audience, however, left with the heaviest hearts following a board decision to approve furloughs and class size increases; purge the district of middle school promotion ceremonies, one-fourth of funding for the Community Adult School and restructure a district office job.



While called a "respectful" disagreement between Superintendent Wes Smith and the Morgan Hill Federation Teachers, the choice by the district to retain \$30,000 in perks for administrators and instead increase class sizes by more students than previously presented to the public befuddled MHFT president Theresa Sage.

"We're very sad that kindergarten classes are going to have 30 students next year. Teaching kinder is hard work and the standards are high. They have to get through a lot of academic work now," Sage said.

For several months a budget committee, comprised of members from the district's three unions representing classified employees, teachers and administrators, have met to develop a recommended list to reach the \$1.26 million needed to balance the 2011-12 annual \$70 million budget ahead of Governor Jerry Brown's May budget revision due out Monday. What happened Tuesday didn't align with the committee's ranking of cuts after Smith used the recommendation to make his own, a common practice, taking district-paid cell phones and monthly bills (\$22,500) and professional dues (\$10,000) off the list presented to the board to for approval Tuesday.

"Just because you do something now, doesn't mean it holds more value," Smith said Tuesday. Most members of the board took little to no issue with the list Smith recommended, except Trustees Ron Woolf and Claudia Rossi who cast the only votes against cutting Adult Education.

"I'm optimistic and confident that we're headed in the right direction," Smith said.

On Wednesday, Sage said the teaching community learned of the board's decision "in bits and pieces," Sage said. "They're discouraged."

"I was disappointed that the school board didn't make the effort to make that cut since the professional dues were the number one thing requested to be cut. Top of the list," she said.

The board asked questions about the cell phone stipends and professional dues, but no member

suggested changing the list in reference to the administrative perks.

"We determined these were the applicable, tangible cuts to be made," Smith said before the board voted. "I respectfully disagree (with Theresa). These items were on the list. Did we take everything on the list? No. Did we get to the number? Absolutely."

Board President Peter Mandel said he didn't have an issue with the list and he trusted the expertise of district staff to recommend the cuts that make the most fiscal sense. "We're going to get another list in the future," that will address the cutting cell phones and professional dues. Smith echoed the sentiment saying they will be up for elimination in the next round of cuts.

Woolf and Rossi said they could not support slashing Adult Education and asked that the five items up for elimination be split with one vote for four reductions: an instructional furlough day, class-size increases, eliminating middle school promotions and restructuring the educational services department. The board passed those cuts unanimously 7-0.

Rossi and Woolf - both elected in November to the board - held strong feelings for Adult Education; Rossi was even brought to tears after holding up hand-written letters from seniors at a convalescent home whom Adult Education teacher Gina Pickett has taught since 1987. The district recommended focusing Adult Education on high school credit recovery, though Trustee Shelle Thomas requested that language be taken out and leave the "how" of the \$100,000 cut to be left to Principal Dennis Browne. Browne has proposed reducing the number of ESL courses, hours of operation and taking a 40 percent pay cut to keep the budget balanced.

"If we make these cuts we might as well say we don't have adult ed," Rossi said. "We're cutting the 'adult' out of 'adult ed.' These classes are not a luxury, they are a lifeline to them."

Woolf taught 34 years in the district and was the principal at the Community Adult School for five years in the 1990s. "I cannot support the adult ed cuts. We all know when it is brought before the board, it is eliminated and it doesn't come back," he said.

Over the past three years, the Adult Education budget has been reduced by 40 percent - now it will be forced to operate on a \$345,000 budget to serve about 1,000 students.

WHAT WAS RECOMMENDED

The MHUSD budget committee, comprised of members from all three bargaining units, recommended the following list in order of importance. Bold items were approved by the board of trustees Tuesday night.

Administration's professional dues: \$30,000

Middle school promotion: \$10,000

Administrator cell phones: \$22,500

Continuation of furlough for teachers/administrators: \$176,000

Educational services department director: \$94,000*

Increase in class size reduction, 27:1 for K-3rd: \$630,000

Increase in class size reduction, 29:1 for 3rd: \$130,000**

Reduce funding for Adult Education: \$100,000

Elimination of middle school extra curriculars: \$71,000

Total savings from budget committee's proposal: \$1,263,500

Actual total cut made May 10: \$1,259,000

Source: MHUSD staff reports March 22, May 10

**Position will be restructured to save \$83,000 not \$94,000*

***Class sizes will increase to 30:1 for kindergarten, 27:1 for 1st, 2nd and 29:1 for 3rd*

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